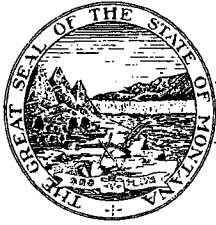


DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICESBRIAN SCHWEITZER  
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DIRECTOR

STATE OF MONTANA

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September 28, 2006

Ken Bechen  
President  
Montana Mosquito and Vector Control Association  
PO Box 740  
Absarokee MT 59001

Dear Ken:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet this past July, to discuss your concerns regarding the future sustainability of a viable comprehensive mosquito control program for Montana. Specifically, you raised concerns that you feel the current program is disjointed and spread between too many departments in state government. We are committed to minimizing barriers and continuing to work in a cooperative and responsive manner.

We all recognize that effective mosquito control efforts are important at both the local and state level for a number of reasons. Mosquito infestations are not only a threat to health but have significant economic impacts on agriculture, tourism, livestock and recreation. As directors of the two agencies most directly involved in mosquito control issues, we share your concerns regarding the sustainability and coordination of an effective surveillance and abatement program.

It is important to understand the history of mosquito control efforts in the state to explain the current administrative environment. Up until 1995, mosquito control activities were primarily located within the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (DHES). When extensive government reorganization took place in 1995, DHES was restructured into the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). As a result, the responsibilities for the various components of mosquito surveillance, testing, and assisting with the establishment of abatement districts were distributed among five agencies and Montana State University. In a cooperative working relationship, the Montana Department of Agriculture and the Department of Public Health and Human Services have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding annually in which the Department of Agriculture provides technical assistance to DPHHS. However, the Department of Agriculture does not have statutory

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responsibility in the mosquito program. We recognize the challenges of working with several different agencies and support the concept of a single point of contact and coordination for all issues relating to mosquito control.

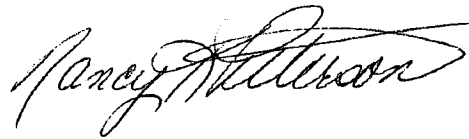
It is also important to note that since 2003, funding for the activities of the DPHHS laboratory, DPHHS vector control program manager, Montana State University surveillance team, and the Department of Agriculture Entomologist have been funded by the Centers for Disease Control Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant at a total annual cost of approximately \$250,000. If this grant were to be terminated by the federal government, current mosquito control efforts would be significantly jeopardized. We also recognize your concerns for securing alternative funding if we are to be successful in the future.

Again, thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention and for the opportunity to strategize about ways to improve this important economic and public health effort. We look forward to working with you on mosquito control issues in the future.

Best regards,



Joan Miles  
Director  
Montana Department of Public  
Health & Human Services



Nancy K. Peterson  
Director  
Montana Department of Agriculture

c: Janice Stroud, Secretary, MMVCA  
Doug Johnson  
David Sullivan